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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH NEW PARLIAMENT SPEAKER

¶1. (sbu) The Ambassador's June 4 courtesy call on new (and quite impressive and articulate) parliament speaker Oliver Dulic focused primarily on parliamentary institutional reform. The Ambassador congratulated Dulic on his appointment, and pledged support for his efforts to make the parliament more of a player in policy setting and to in turn strengthen this key institution of democracy.

¶2. (sbu) Dulic noted that his most immediate priorities would be passing legislation to reform procedural rules in the parliament to eliminate - or at least discourage - unprofessional behavior and baseless obstructionism from, primarily, the Radical Party. In addition, Dulic said he would be looking for creative ways, including using development assistance, to create for the parliament a sustainable corps of professional committee staff that could eventually provide not just expertise but also continuity and institutional memory for incoming MP's.

¶3. (sbu) Dulic admitted that allocating committee chairs to the Radicals was a distasteful practice, but said it was probably unavoidable due to a) the precedent of Radicals chairing committees in previous parliaments owing to their plurality in the body, and b) the likelihood that they would completely gridlock the work of the committees if they were not given a share of leadership positions. He noted as well that the SRS had duly and democratically elected MP's, and excluding them from the legislative process would do more harm to democracy in Serbia than dealing with their antics.

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